



# Southeast Fishery Bulletin

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## 2011 Decrease of the Gulf of Mexico Red Grouper Commercial Quota and New Requirements for Buoy Gear Small Entity Compliance Guide

NOAA Fisheries Service announces a final rule that decreases the commercial quota of red grouper for the Gulf of Mexico. Because red grouper is a part of the shallow-water grouper (SWG) complex, this also reduces the SWG quota. The rule also requires buoy gear floats to be marked as part of the revised definition of buoy gear and makes minor revisions to codified text. The final rule publishes in the *Federal Register* on December 1, 2010, and will be effective January 1, 2011.

### Commercial red grouper quota

The red grouper quota is reduced from 5.75 million pounds (MP) to 4.32 MP. The rule also reduces the 2011 commercial SWG quota from 7.75 MP to 4.83 MP which reflects the reduction in the red grouper quota as well as a 100,000 pound gag quota implemented through a separate temporary rule. Recreational regulations remain unchanged as recent harvest levels have been sufficiently below catch targets.

### Buoy gear

With changes in Gulf of Mexico commercial longline boundaries and the requirement of a longline endorsement to use the gear in the eastern Gulf of Mexico, an increased number of vessels have switched from longline to modified versions of traditional buoy gear when reef fish fishing. The current definition of buoy gear is ambiguous, which limits the enforceability of this gear type. The new definition is more specific by limiting the number of hooks to no more than 10, limiting the terminal end weight to no more than 10 pounds, restricting the line to rope or monofilament (not cable or wire), restricting the length of the drop line to no greater than two times the depth, and requiring that hooks must be attached no more than 30 feet from the terminal end. In addition, the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council requested that each buoy must

display the official number of the vessel (United States Coast Guard documentation number or state registration number) to assist law enforcement in monitoring the use of the gear. Therefore, the rule requires floats used when setting buoy gear to be labeled with the official vessel number.

### Minor revisions to codified text

The rule makes minor revisions to reef fish regulations. These include re-codifying commercial and recreational quotas for greater amberjack, a revision of the recreational accountability measure for greater amberjack, and the removal of outdated language for the red snapper individual fishing quota program. The intended effect of these revisions is to clarify current regulations.

### Other information

This bulletin serves as a Small Entity Compliance Guide, complying with section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act of 1996. This bulletin provides only a summary of the information about the rule. Discrepancies between this bulletin and the rule as published in the *Federal Register* will be resolved in favor of the *Federal Register*.

Copies of the final rule are available by contacting NOAA Fisheries Service's Southeast Regional Office at 263 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701. The final rule can be obtained in electronic form from the *Federal Register* Web site:

<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html> (use advanced search for final rules using "BA04" as a keyword).

### Need more information on these topics?

Southeast Regional Office's Web page:  
<http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov>.